

[Interview with Vito Cacciola #46]

ORIGINAL MSS. OR FIELD NOTES (Check one)

PUB. Living Lore in

New England

TITLE Italian Cobbler, Beverly - #46

WRITER Merton R. Lovett

DATE 4/26/39 WDS. PP. 5

CHECKER DATE

SOURCES GIVEN (?) Interview

COMMENTS 4/26/39

[?] Paper No. 46

. . .

Interview

with

Vito Cacciola

. . .

by

Library of Congress

Merton R. Lovett

. . .

“As well as remembered.”

Interview with Vito Cacciola

By Merton R. Lovett

. . .

(from memory)

“No, business does not get any better. Since Easter I finda little to do. Most often I must worka for nothing. Also, I giva much credit. See, here is list of moneys owed me. Sometimes I fixa shoes for nothing.

“You are righta. Free work is nota good for business. But charity is a good for de soul. It paya much in happiness.

“Last week a poor woman brought in to me one shoe. The heel wasa twist-ed out of shape. It causa her to limp.

“She saya to me, ‘Vito, I must go Thursday to Providence, where my sister geta buried. For shame I cannot wear this shoe. Can you fixa it for a little money? More I cannot pay.’

“Yes, she tella de truth. Her family starva on W.P.A., with fourteen dollars each week.

“Twenty-five cents was de price I maka for her. It was very reasonable. I must taka off de heel and builda a new one from bottom up. It requires half of an hour. Besides, I maka that shoe brilliant with polish.

Library of Congress

"De woman coma for shoe in evening. She was mucha pleased. She saya, 'Vito, it isa fine, but it looka so good, de other shoe will seema by comparison to look shabby.'

2

"Then she weepa, and tella me she has no more money.

"No, Mr. Lovett, I does not always have such effect on womens. They do not always crya when they visit me. Most often I giva them courage. Often I maka them smile.

"Sure, I fixa de second shoe and for nothing. I ama certain it was de good deed.

"But times are most difficult. Everybody isa worried. Peoples have little money and mucha fear. They forgeta trust in de good Lord. Next day another woman sheda tears in de shop also.

"She was de widow with five childrens. I meeta her on de street. Quickly I seea that she walka with pain. She stepa like she walka on hot stove, lika this.

"I ask-ed her, 'Mrs. Biodini, what is de matter? Does you walka so from rheumatism?'

"She answer, 'No, it is de shoe that maka trouble.'

"My, my, Mr. Lovett. De shoe has mucha hole and little sole. She walka on de ground. I warna her that she will be hurt-ed by nail or geta sickness.

"Sure, she also hava no money to geta de shoes fixed. I aska her to come to de shop. I promise to fixa them without cost.

3

"Oh, no, she was not beautiful. She was old. When de shoes is done, she cannot reacha down to puta them on. She is mucha lame.

Library of Congress

"Yes, I puta them on and tie-ed de laces. Then she weep-ed also.

"Whata you think she saya? She saya, 'You is de good man, Vito.' I felta great joy. Does you never hava such re-esperience, Mr. Lovett?"

.

"De man who just goa out has for years been de drunka. If you had beena absent, he woulda ask-ed me for money.

"I knowa that, because he has ask-ed me many times before. Often I have urg-ed him to cuta out whiskey. It does no gooda yet.

"No, I would not giva him money to day. 'Vito,' he would saya, 'my baby she is sick. Will you giva me dollar for medicine?'

"I knowa he lies. Several times I paya him. Always he drinka de money.

"Can such a man be reform-ed? Yes, many times. Often de Lord maka miracle. It is worth de trya.

4

"I tella such peoples that God will helpa them, but until they showa de good heart. I will not giva them money. Let de friends who drinka with them doa that.

"I have seen several bad men repent-ed. Often they maka de best Christians afterwards.

"Why? Well, I thinks their sad resperience maka them wise. They knowa de suffering and punishments for sin. They also recognize de temptations, even when they is disguised and looka beautiful. And de repented sinner hava more patience and kindness in his heart. He knowa how stronger de devil is.

Library of Congress

"Yes, many good mens were once wick-ed. Some of them becoma de best preachers and priests. They knowa well de weakness of mens and de goodness of God.

"Sure, I hava beena de sinner. I am sometimes de sinner now. I must often pray for help and must fighta temptation with enthusiasm."

.

"It was indeed a terrible accident. I knowa de little Italian girl what was kill-ed. De automobile, it is most dangerous.

"No, I does not wisha to drive de auto. I should not wanta to hurt myself ar killa somebodys.

5

"When I rida in one I does not feela peace. I am worried. Most drivers maka too much speed. I think they must wish to geta back before they geta there.

"One day I rida to Providence with my brother, Peter. Angela goa also. My gracious, we flya fast lika pigeon.

"I thinka all de autos is flya that day too. They crowda each other like flies which smella spaghetti.

"Peter ask-ed me, 'Vito, why does you holda the door so tight? Is you nervous?'

"No, I was nota nervous, Mr. Lovett. Peter is de good driver, but I feela more safe when I holda to something. It giva me confidence.

"Yes, thanka de good Lord, we arriva back in safety. Angela saya then, "Uncle Vito, was it not de lovely ride? Did you lika best to ride through de city or in de country?"

Library of Congress

“What did I maka answer? By jingo, I tella her, I lika best to geta home.”

.